

# The Dream

*move, and sink back into sleep when they are done. They sometimes speak as a chorus, in their sleep.]*

PASTRYCOOK:

It is related, but Allah is all wise and all knowing, that one night in Baghdad, a poor man lay down to sleep. While some in the city had fine carpets, and some in the city had fine palaces and fine pillows for their heads, he had only the bare floor in his little hut at the end of a cobbled street lined with palm trees and a gray stone courtyard containing a dry and cracked little fountain with a design of birds upon it. All of us are equal in our sleep, and in our sleep all of us may speak to God and hear our destiny revealed. This night the poor man lay down with a heavy heart, and a man came to him in a dream.

MAN IN THE DREAM:

My poor man, know that your fortune lies far away in Cairo. Go and seek it there.

CHORUS [*turning in their sleep*]:

Your fortune lies far away in Cairo. Go and seek it there.

PASTRYCOOK:

The very next morning the poor man set out for Cairo, and after many weeks and much hardship, he arrived in that city.

CHORUS [*turning in their sleep*]:

Night fell. He could not afford to stay at an inn, so he lay down to sleep in the courtyard of a mosque.

THIEVES:

That night robbers entered the mosque and from there broke into an adjoining house.

FAMILY:

Awakened by the noise, the owners raised the alarm and called for help.

POLICE:

The police arrived, found the poor man from Baghdad, beat him, and threw him into jail.

PASTRYCOOK:

Three days later, the chief of police ordered his men to bring the stranger before him.

CHIEF OF POLICE:

Where do you come from?

POOR MAN:

I come from Baghdad.

CHIEF OF POLICE:

And what brought you to Cairo?

POOR MAN:

A man came to me in a dream, saying,

POOR MAN AND MAN IN THE DREAM:

My poor man, your fortune lies far away in Cairo. Go and seek it there.

POOR MAN:

But when I came to Cairo, the fortune I was promised proved to be the beating your men so generously gave me.

CHIEF OF POLICE:

What a fool to believe in dreams! Know this: I too have heard a voice in my sleep, not just once but three times. It said,

CHIEF OF POLICE AND PASTRYCOOK:

Go to Baghdad and find a little hut at the end of a cobbled street lined with palm trees and a gray stone courtyard containing a dry and cracked little fountain with a design of birds upon it. Under that old fountain a great sum of money lies buried. Go there and dig it up.

CHIEF OF POLICE:

But did I go? Of course not! Yet fool that you are, you have come all the way to Cairo on the strength of one idle dream. Here, take this.

*[He tosses the POOR MAN a coin.]*

It will help you on your way back to your own country.

PASTRYCOOK:

The poor man recognized at once that the house and garden described in the dream of the chief of police were his own. He took the money and set out promptly on his homeward journey.

CHORUS *[turning in their sleep]*:

Go on back to Baghdad, City of Peace and Poets. Your fortune is in the garden of your home.

PASTRYCOOK:

As soon as he reached his house he went into the garden, dug beneath the fountain, and uncovered a great treasure.

CHORUS:

Your fortune is in the garden of your home.

PASTRYCOOK:

And thus the words of the dream were wondrously fulfilled.

CHORUS [*turning in their sleep*]:

Your fortune is in the garden of your home and speaks to you in dreams.

[*The scene dissolves back to the court of HARUN AL-RASHID.*]

HARUN AL-RASHID:

That is an excellent tale indeed, Pastrycook, if it is true. But whether it is true or not, I do pardon you.

SCHEHEREZADE:

With that the butcher came forward, kissed the ground, and said,

SCHEHEREZADE AND BUTCHER:

Most excellent king, grant me the same favor as my colleague the pastrycook, and I will tell you an even fairer tale—a tale that may inspire you to generous deeds.

HARUN AL-RASHID:

It is permitted.

SCHEHEREZADE:

And the butcher began the tale of "The Contest of Generosity."

[*The finger cymbals ring once.*]